



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

**Accomplishment Report**

The **Alpena Fishery Resources Office (FRO)** is located in Alpena, Michigan and works to meet U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fishery and Ecosystem goals within Lake Huron, Western Lake Erie, and connecting waters of the St. Marys River, St. Clair River, and Detroit River. Activities include Aquatic Species Conservation and Management, Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management, Cooperation with Native Americans, Leadership in Science and Technology, Partnerships and Accountability, Public Use, and Workforce Management – all of which are conducted in alignment with the Service Fisheries Program Vision for the Future. The station is one of many field offices located within Region 3, the Great Lakes Big Rivers Region.

## **Aquatic Species Conservation and Management**

### **St. Marys River Lake Sturgeon Project**

*Submitted by Scott Koproski  
Fishery Biologist*

On May 15, Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski traveled to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, to begin working on the St. Marys River lake sturgeon telemetry project. Biological Science Aid Meghan Kline began her appointment as well and she will be stationed in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, working on this project. This project is funded through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and partners include: Lake Superior State University, Bay Mills Indian Community, and the Soo Area Sportsman.



Koproski and Kline began deploying set lines to capture lake sturgeon utilizing the St. Marys. A set line consists of twenty five baited hooks spaced 10 ft. apart on a 300 ft. line. The 300 ft. line has an anchor and buoy on each end. The set line is allowed to fish for either one or two nights. Over 50 set line lifts were made over the last three weeks of May. Three lake sturgeon were captured and two of these fish exceeded the 50 in. minimum length limit necessary for implanting the sonic telemetry tags. Set lines will continue to be fished through the month of

June and tracking began with the first sonic tag implantation. By following these fish we hope to identify spawning locations within the St. Marys River or identify new tributaries that sturgeon are utilizing.

This work is an example of Alpena FRO's commitment to the following Fisheries Program Vision priorities: "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management", "Partnerships and Accountability", and "Cooperation with Native American Tribes".

## **Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management**

### **First Ever Region 3 Fish Passage Workshop**

*Submitted by Susan Wells  
Fishery Biologist*

The Alpena FRO hosted the first Regional Fish Passage Workshop (Workshop) from May 9 -11. Coordination for the Workshop was directed by the Regional Fish Passage Coordinator, Tim Patronski with assistance from a committee of field station fish passage coordinators. The purpose of the Workshop was to provide a forum to share ideas, concerns, and present examples of fish passage restoration among field offices, regional office, and other Service programs in an informal setting. Discussions during the Workshop revolved around issues such as invasive species and the challenges they present when reconnecting habitats, development of a pre and post monitoring plan for fish passage projects, better coordination among Service programs to implement fish passage projects, and development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the fish passage program in Region 3.



Presentations were given by multiple Service programs including Refuges, Ecological Services, Fisheries, Sea Lamprey Control, Federal Aid, and the National Fish Passage Coordinator. This provided the attendees a cross programmatic overview of projects occurring throughout the region and stimulated discussion on differing methodologies for conducting projects. As part of the Workshop, Biologist Susan Wells (Alpena FRO Fish Passage Coordinator) led a field trip to a local culvert replacement project recently completed with the use of a recycled railroad tanker car as a bottomless culvert. Attendees of the Workshop were able to engage in productive discussions concerning fish passage projects and their implementation. The Workshop was well

received by all in attendance with the anticipation that a follow up meeting will occur next year and be expanded to include Service partners.

This is an example of collaboration between Service programs to enhance aquatic habitat restoration which will benefit fish and wildlife resources and increase coordination within the agency. This effort addresses the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priority of "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" and "Partnerships and Accountability".

## **Construction Has Begun for Alpena FRO Partners Program**

*Submitted by Heather Rawlings  
Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

Construction began on May 23, 2006 to restore 19 acres of wetlands on 5 sites throughout Northern Michigan. Wetland restoration sites were on the properties of three private landowners located in Presque Isle, Montmorency and Cheboygan Counties. Spring construction at these sites means they will quickly fill with water, and will be able to benefit migratory birds and possibly provide nesting immediately. A mix of waterfowl, shorebirds, and common upland birds were observed in the restored wetlands within 48 hours following construction. BCK Ventures out of Mio, Michigan was the contractor for the sites. Funding for the design and restoration of these sites was provided by the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Program. Design and oversight of the construction was provided by Biologist Rawlings, PFW Coordinator for Northern Michigan.



Completion of habitat restoration projects contribute toward the "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" priority of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

## **Partnerships and Accountability**

### **St. Marys River Fishery Task Group Meeting**

*Submitted by Anjanette Bowen  
Fishery Biologist*

The St. Marys River Fishery Task Group (SMRFTG) met on May 4 to coordinate and discuss upcoming activities and issues of concern regarding St. Marys River fisheries. Alpena FRO Fishery Biologist Bowen chaired the meeting which was held at CORA in Sault Ste. Marie,



Michigan. The group coordinated activities for the upcoming 2006 St. Marys River Fish Community Survey which is scheduled for August and the annual Fall Walleye Recruitment Survey which is scheduled for September. Dave Fielder (Michigan DNR) presented a summary of the 2005 St. Marys River Harvest Survey and Bill Gardner (DFO) presented results of their 2005 Fall Index Netting Survey. Michelle Selzer (Michigan DEQ) provided information on the St. Marys River RAP Beneficial Use Impairments (BUI) related to fisheries. She mentioned that BUI delisting criteria will be developed and that fishery data will be needed to determine whether the delisting criteria have been met. The next task group meeting is scheduled to be held November 2.

The SMRFTG is comprised of a number of agencies with management authority or other interests in the St. Marys River. Membership includes the Michigan DNR, Ontario MNR, Bay Mills Indian Community, Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority, DFO Canada, Lake Superior State University, Sault College of Applied Arts, and the Service.

The task group was established under the authority of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's Lake Huron Committee in 1997 to achieve a meaningful understanding and a joint strategy for enhancing and maximizing the fishery resources of the St. Marys River. Publications produced on the St. Marys River fishery by the Task Group may be found on the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's website at <http://www.glfc.org/lakecom/lhc/lhchome.php> under 'Publications and Products'.

St. Marys River Fishery Task Group efforts fulfill a multi-agency partnership approach to fishery conservation and management on the St. Marys River. These activities support the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities for "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management".

## Commercial Fishers Appreciation Dinner

*Submitted by Adam Kowalski  
Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

During May 2006, Fishery Biologist Adam Kowalski started preparing for the 9th Annual Commercial Fishers Appreciation Dinner. The Alpena FRO annually hosts this dinner for Michigan state-licensed and tribal commercial fishers that assist us with a lake sturgeon tagging project in Lake Huron. Kowalski reserved a pavilion at a city park in Bay City to hold the dinner and made other arrangements for the event. A number of prizes and gifts such as life vests, rain gear, t-shirts, and can coolers are



purchased for the event to show our appreciation. All costs for the event are paid for with volunteer funds.

Commercial fishers encounter lake sturgeon as by-catch during normal fishing operations for lake whitefish, yellow perch, and channel catfish. The fishers volunteer time by tagging and collecting biological information on lake sturgeon by-catch. Currently, 10 commercial fishers operating 16 boats participate in the study. Approximately 430 lake sturgeon have been tagged since the program began in 1995.

This partnership between the Service and Lake Huron commercial fishers to track and monitor lake sturgeon has been in place since 1995, and is consistent with the “Partnerships and Accountability” priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future to develop and improve long-term partnerships.

## **Leadership in Science and Technology**

### **Lake Sturgeon Surgery Demonstration**

*Submitted by Scott Koproski  
Fishery Biologist*

On May 5, Fishery Biologists Scott Koproski and James Boase traveled to Sarnia, Ontario to take part in a surgery demonstration workshop for implanting sonic tags in lake sturgeon. Biologist Koproski obtained funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to capture, tag and track lake sturgeon in the St. Marys River. Partners on this project are Lake Superior State University (LSSU), Bay Mills Indian Community, and Soo Areas



Sportsman. Ashley Moerke, LSSU limnology professor, Roger Greil, LSSU Aquatics Research Laboratory Manager, Meghan Kline, LSSU student, Dr. Bruce Manny, U.S. Geological Survey, and Jim McFee and Christopher Vandergoot with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources all participated in the workshop as well. Meghan Kline will be hired by the Alpena FRO through the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) and she will be working primarily on the lake sturgeon project in the St. Marys River.

Lake sturgeon were captured and held by Purdy's Fishery (Purdy's) located in Sarnia, Ontario. Purdy's continues to be a valuable partner for providing live lake sturgeon and facilities to host similar events for resource professionals. Twelve (12) lake sturgeon captured from Lake Huron were made available for the demonstration at Purdy's. Fishery Biologist Boase demonstrated the

incision location and suture knots to the group. Once Boase completed the procedure on the first fish it was measured, tagged and released. All participants of the workshop were allowed to practice on subsequent fish with Boase's close supervision. The techniques instructed and performed by participants were valuable to all present and will be used during the St. Marys River lake sturgeon telemetry project which will begin this month, and for other projects being conducted by partner agencies.

This work is an example of Alpena FRO's commitment to the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities of "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management", "Partnerships and Accountability", "Cooperation with Native American Tribes", and "Leadership in Science and Technology".

## Public Use

### **Camp Chickagami**

*Submitted by Susan Wells  
Fishery Biologist*

A group of 40 fifth grade students from Lincoln Elementary, in Alpena, Michigan attended an overnight retreat at Camp Chickagami. Two days were spent camping and participating in a variety of outdoor and hands on educational activities. This included canoeing, fishing, orienteering, and group building games. Biologist Wells and Project Leader McClain participated in the event on May 25th by educating the group on projects that are being conducted at the Alpena Fisheries Resources Office and careers within the field of natural resources.

The kids also participated in a seining demonstration. A one-hundred foot seine was used to sample the shoreline of Lake Esau where the camp is situated. Fish collected included spottail shiners, logperch, and rainbow darters. The students were then asked a series of questions on the habitat types for each of the fish. After the demonstration a packet of games and information regarding the USFWS was handed out to each student.



This accomplishment provided an educational and outreach opportunity for local students and adults associated with a summer camp. We utilized a hands-on approach to teaching these 40 students about fish and their habitat requirements. They were also exposed to ongoing projects at the Alpena FRO and the different sampling methods used by the staff and provided an outlet to educate and interact with youth groups on issues regarding Great Lakes aquatic resources. This project addresses the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priority for "Public Use".



## Workforce Management

### 2006 MOCC Course — Onalaska, WI

*Submitted by Aaron Woldt  
Fishery Biologist*

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO served as lead instructor for a Department of Interior (DOI) Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC) at the LaCrosse Fishery Resources Office (FRO) from May 23 to 25, 2006. Adam Kowalski (Alpena FRO), Brian Pember (Upper Mississippi River NW&FR Winona), Joe Reid (Trempealeau NWR), and Randy Lilla (Onalaska LE) co-instructed the course and were assisted by volunteer Don



Schroeder and Region 3 MOCC Coordinator Dave Wedan. The primary goal of this course was to train Service employees to safely operate motorboats in the work environment. DOI Policy 485 DM 22 requires operators of all department watercraft to successfully complete MOCC training and complete refresher MOCC training every 5 years thereafter.

Woldt, Kowalski, Pember, Reid, and Lilla staged an informative, well organized course that included classroom, pool, and on-water instruction. Instructors lectured on topics ranging from boat orientation, state boating regulations, boat and trailer maintenance, emergency procedures, rules of the road, aids to navigation, towing, anchoring and beaching, slow and at-speed maneuvers, marlinspike, fire suppression, and weather.

Thirteen students from 6 Service offices, Wisconsin DNR, and the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service received training and successfully earned MOCC certification.

MOCC training and refresher training are valuable curricula designed to make Service personnel competent and safe boaters. Teaching MOCC courses is consistent with the Service's goal of providing employees with opportunities to maintain competencies, improve opportunities for professional achievement, and safely perform their jobs under the "Workforce Management" priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.



## **Alpena FRO Accomplishment Report**

**May 2006**

**U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alpena FRO  
145 Water Street, Alpena, MI 49707  
Phone: 989/356-5102**

For more information on Alpena FRO programs and activities or to view other station reports visit our website located at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/alpena/>.